sectors. Since agricultural market is a State subject, it is for the State Governments to adopt the Model Law as suited to them. The States of Madhya Pradesh, Himachal Pradesh, Punjab, Sikkim, Nagaland, Andhra Pradesh, Chhattisgarh and Rajasthan have made changes in their respective APMC Act on the lines of the Model Act. The States/UTs of Kerala, Manipur, Andaman & Nicobar Islands, Dadra & Nagar Haveli, Daman & Diu and Lakshadweep have no APMC Act and hence there is no necessity for adopting the Model Act. The APMC act of Tamil Nadu already provides for the reforms envisaged in the Model Act. The States/UTs of Haryana, Karnataka, NCT of Delhi, Chandigarh, Maharashtra, UP and Gujarat have partially adopted the provisions of Model Act.

This Ministry has also launched the Scheme for Development/ Strengthening of Agricultural Marketing Infrastructure, Grading and Standardisation to assist the states in creating the required marketing infrastructure which can reduce the role of intermediaries, so as to ensure maximum share of farmers in ultimate price of fruits and vegetables.

Suicides by farmers in Punjab

†2906. SHRI RAVI SHANKAR PRASAD:
SHRI RAJ MOHINDER SINGH MAJITHA:

Will the Minister of AGRICULTURE be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that the farmers have committed suicide due to debt stress in Punjab also during the past years like the farmers of the other States;

(b) if not, whether it is a fact that this matter has been brought into the notice of Governments by the present Chief Minister of the State; and

(c) if so, the details thereof and the steps taken by Government in this regard till now?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE (SHRI KANTI LAL BHURIA): (a) to (c) As reported by the State Government, there were two cases of suicide by farmers in Punjab during the year 2003-04. This is due to various reasons like non-payment of loan from Arhtia/Bank loans and tension in family, etc.; however, it has been stated to be difficult to explain the phenomenon to a single cause.

†Original notice of the question was received in Hindi.

The State Government has set up a Punjab State Farmers' Commission to find ways and means to rejuvenate Punjab's economy. It will also look into the issue of suicide by farmers in the State, its causes and will suggest remedial measures including rehabilitation and compensation to the affected persons/ families, etc.

Increasing soil fertility in drought-prone areas

2907. SHRI THANGA TAMIL SELVAN: Will the Minister of AGRICULTURE be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that frequent droughts in a region adversely affects the fertility of the soil, eventually affecting productivity;

(b) the steps taken by Government to improve soil fertility in such regions; and

(c) whether Government would consider launching a special scheme for the drought-prone districts of Madurai, Theni, Dindigul, Ramanathapuram, Thirunelveli, etc. in Tamil Nadu?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE (SHRI KANTI LAL BHURIA): (a) In general, the occurrence of drought does not have significant effect on diminishing soil fertility in short run. However frequent drought in a region can have adverse effect on soil fertility by way of (i) reduced bio-mass production (ii) fast decomposing of soil organic matter (iii) poor bio-activity in the Rhizospher and (iv) deterioration of soil structure and water holding capacity.

(b) The Central Research Institute for Dry Land Agriculture (CRIDA), Hyderabad and its network of 25 All India Coordinated Research Project on Dry Land Agriculture (AICRPDA) Centres Provide Technical Support to the State Governments by way of training, exposure visits on managing soil fertility during drought through various technologies in different agro ecological regions.

(c) No such proposal has been received from the Government of Tamil Nadu.

Rate of interest on farmers loans

2908. SHRIMATI BRINDA KARAT: Will the Minsiter of AGRICULTURE be pleased to state:

(a) whether M.S. Swaminathan Farmers Commission recommended